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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001271

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W  
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, DCHA/OFDA, AND AFR/SP  
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, USAID/SFO AND FAS  
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH  
NSC FOR PMARCHAM, MMAGAN, AND TSHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
USUN FOR TMALY  
BRUSSELS FOR PBROWN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SUDAN - USAID FLOOD AND RETURNEE ASSESSMENT IN UNITY STATE

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1. Summary. From August 7 to 9, a USAID staff member traveled to Unity State to assess the flood emergency. Three counties in Unity State are seriously flooded, and between 6,000 and 13,000 families displaced statewide. Aid agencies and local officials are concerned because flooding began in July, which is unusually early, and the main flood season is still ahead. The USAID representative also investigated an alternate route to return Southern Sudanese internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Khartoum to Equatoria. The current river route is too slow and air travel is too expensive to accommodate the high volume of Equatorian IDPs who are likely to return. State authorities agreed that a better route would be by road from Khartoum to Bentiu, then by river from Bentiu to Juba. The joint U.N.-government Returns Task Force in Khartoum will consider this option. End summary.

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Flood Assessment  
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2. At the invitation of the governor, a USAID representative traveled to Unity State with the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) Director for Returns and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Returns Coordinator. The team traveled on oil companies' airplanes and helicopters to and within Unity State. Upon arrival in Bentiu, the USAID staff member attended the weekly interagency humanitarian coordination meeting, where the U.N. Regional Coordinator reported that flooding has affected eight of nine counties in the state, with three counties "seriously affected". Humanitarian agencies estimate that flooding has displaced 6,000 families -- or approximately 36,000 people -- but assessments are incomplete and information is poor, as rural areas are inaccessible. Government officials estimate that the flooding has affected 13,000 families, including the populations of inaccessible villages.

3. Local authorities do not yet consider Unity State a general disaster area. Rains have been good for crops in areas not yet flooded, and cattle herds are healthy. Maize will soon be available in some areas, and fish are widely available. Nonetheless, the state government is appealing for urgent flood relief for some severely affected locations. Officials noted that flooding comes from two sources: rainfall in western Unity, and the rising White Nile River system in eastern Unity.

¶4. The team flew by helicopter from Bentiu to the most-affected area, southern Mayom County, located in western Unity State. The team observed an estimated 1,000 or more abandoned huts in one portion of southern Mayom County. The residents reportedly have gone to higher land in rural areas or into Mayom and Mankien towns. The governor said that people moved to low-lying areas in southern Mayom County during the war. This is the first serious flooding since people moved to these areas, and they will likely resettle on higher land where they used to live, according to the governor.

¶5. The flood response has been limited to date. In some areas, the U.N. World Food Program has distributed food, 80 percent of which was donated by USAID. The Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) flew in medicines and donated USD 500,000 to state authorities for flood response. The Government of National Unity (GNU) Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in Khartoum flew in 1,000 plastic sheets and 1,000 blankets, which were distributed to people in Bentiu town. The U.N. Children's Fund brought in 1,000 emergency household kits from Malakal and will bring in more kits and chlorine to purify drinking water. IOM has 1,000 mosquito nets, 1,000 blankets, and 500 plastic sheets intended for returnees that can be used for flood relief. Household supplies such as water containers and cooking sets have not yet been distributed. The non-governmental organization CARE and USAID partner World Relief operate 15 health clinics in the state and are organizing mobile medical teams. To date, there are no reports of nutritional or livestock health problems, but the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization predicts damage to crops and a reduction in the harvest.

¶6. USAID is responding to flooding in Unity State through current partners and programs. WFP and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) are distributing food, and World Relief is providing health services. In addition, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) expects to provide new funding to NPA to procure and deliver non-food items to remote areas of Unity State that are not accessible from Bentiu.

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A Better Returnee Route from Khartoum to Equatoria  
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¶7. In 2007, approximately 45,000 IDPs have returned home through the GOSS, GNU, U.N., and IOM organized returns program. These returnees have traveled from northern Sudan to Southern Sudan and Southern Kordofan. The majority have traveled by road to Southern Kordofan, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Warrab states. Pilot programs have returned small numbers of IDPs further south, to Shambe in Lakes State, Bor in Jonglei State, and Equatoria; however, costs and travel time limit the expansion of these programs. Road transport is inexpensive and fast in parts of Sudan, but the road network in Southern Sudan is poor. River transport is cheapest, but very slow. Using the available three passenger barges, a maximum of 10,000 IDPs per year could travel by river from Kost, White Nile State, to Juba, Central Equatoria State. Air transport would cost approximately USD 25 million for 100,000 people, which is prohibitively expensive.

¶8. USAID/OFDA is contributing USD 4.5 million to the IOM returns program during Fiscal Year 2007, and recently became involved with IOM and SSRRC in planning a more effective way for IDPs to return to Equatoria. USAID suggested using roads as far south as possible, which is to Bentiu, and using the river from there to Juba. A USAID representative discussed this with the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs in Khartoum, the SSRRC Chairman in Juba, and the Governor of Unity State. All agreed that this route would be better than the alternatives.

¶9. In Bentiu, the USAID representative, the SSRRC Khartoum Director for Returns, and the IOM Khartoum Returns Coordinator met with the Unity State Governor and SSRRC Director to discuss this plan in more detail. The team drove to see two possible docks at Adok and Tharjath. While Adok is conveniently located, it lacks a proper dock. Tharjath, on a tributary of the White Nile, has a new dock

and road built by a Malaysian oil company.

¶10. The team concluded that Tharjath is the preferred docking site for loading returnees onto barges. The total travel time from Khartoum to Juba would be approximately 10 days: 3 days from Khartoum to Bentiu; 1 day for resting at the way station and loading belongings onto the barges; and 6 days on the river to Juba. Approximately 36,000 Equatorians could return from Khartoum to Equatoria in one year via this route. The IOM and SSRRC officials will recommend this route to the Returns Task Force and, if the Task Force agrees as expected, USAID/OFDA's contribution to IOM will be used to begin this operation in November.

POWERS